
a *Grace Notes* course

First Peter

Lesson 9

1 Peter 4:16 to 5:7

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1 Peter

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1 Peter 4:16 to 5:7

1 Peter 4:16

"Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter."

Yet if anyone suffers

The "if" recognizes in the Greek those who suffer as Christians. God designs all suffering for the Christian for blessing. If we suffer for our sin God designs that for blessing because we are blessed when we are restored to fellowship. The purpose of discipline of the Christian is to bring him back to blessing (Hebrews 12:6).

God uniquely blesses us for suffering in time because there will be no suffering in eternity. God cannot show His unique love for us in trial there because there will be no trial there. He can only show blessing in suffering in time.

as a Christian

The "as" puts the Christian in strong contrast to the four terms used to designate criminals in the previous verse. We can suffer for our sin or we can suffer representing the name of Christ.

In the entire Bible the name "Christian" occurs only here and Acts 11:26 and 26:28. Literally, the name "Christian" means "Christ ones." We are those who belong to Christ.

"Then Agrippa said to Paul, 'You almost persuade me to become a Christian'" (Acts 26:28). Agrippa used this name as a term of reproach. Today "Christian" is a rather meaningless term. We call the United States or Canada "Christian" nations.

Principle

Christians are those who belong to Christ.

Application

Are you a Christian or just a Baptist, Presbyterian or Catholic? A Christian is not one who has been confirmed or baptized or joined a church. This is a popular misconception today. Christians are people who have invited Jesus Christ into the

personal experience of their heart and life. They do this by trusting in the finished work of Christ in suffering for their sin. When they do this He changes their viewpoint on life. He gives them different desires.

If I were to ask you "Are you a Christian?" what would you say? Yes or no? You might say, "I don't know." Suppose I said, "Are you a citizen of the United States, yes or no?" You know for sure whether you are or not. If I say, "Do you belong to Christ?" and you answer "Well, I don't know. I suppose I do." That is a good sign that you are not a Christian. A genuine Christian knows that he is a Christian (1 John 5:11-13).

let him not be ashamed

It is an honor to suffer for our testimony for Christ.

"According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death" (Philippians 1:20).

"Ashamed" is the feeling of fear that prevents us from doing something (2 Corinthians 10:8; Philippians 1:20; 1 John 2:28). This term is used of being ashamed before the Lord Jesus at His Judgment Seat. The Judgment Seat is where the Lord will evaluate the lives of Christians.

We can translate "Let him not be ashamed" as "Don't be embarrassed." This is a challenge toward poise. If we suffer there is no reason to fall apart or throw a tantrum. Some Christians live in panic palace. They are constantly upset and full of self-pity.

In this verse there is no shame if we suffer in a Christian manner rather than as a lawbreaker (1 Peter 4:15).

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek" (Romans 1:16).

"Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God" (2 Timothy 1:8).

Principle

A strong Christian develops poise in the face of suffering.

Application

Does shame keep you from sharing your faith? If so, you have lost your poise as a Christian. Strong Christians share their faith. We can fly in the face of fear because our identity is wrapped up in Christ. Our grip of our position in Him is so powerful that nothing and no one intimidates us.

but let him glorify God

We glorify God when we use His provisions. Suppose a rich relative leaves you millions of dollars. He puts the money in a bank account for you and hands you a checkbook. You have not bothered to balance the account. You have not bothered to look at the account. Mature believers know what is in their spiritual account book. They know how to apply it to their life. When we use God's provision, we glorify Him for what He has given. We glorify Him by spending His vast resources (verses 11, 14).

"Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

in this matter

"In this matter" is literally "in the sphere of his name." Note that the word "name" is not in the New King James Version. The New American Standard Bible translates this phrase "but in that name let him glorify God." God gives all His provisions through Jesus and what He represents.

Principle

We glorify God by using His provisions for us in Christ.

Application

We glorify God in connection with the name of Christ. The idea of "name" is revelation. As we reveal who Christ is and recognize the reality of who He is and what He did, we glorify God. We glorify God the best when we recognize the person and work of Christ in our lives.

1 Peter 4:17

"For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?"

For the time has come

These are mighty solemn words for the household of faith. Judgment will begin with the family of God. This judgment is a judgment in time, not eternity. No Christian will face the Great White Throne judgment (John 5:24; Romans 8:1). However, a Christian will face discipline for stepping out of fellowship with God. This discipline takes place in time. We will not face this discipline in eternity.

"Time" means appointed time or the opportune point of time a thing should be done especially in view of divine discipline. If believers do not confess their sins then they face the chastening hand of God. So this is dealing with self-judgment, the ability of Christians to scrutinize their life in time (1 Corinthians 11:28-30).

The time "has come" for living in constant fellowship with God but we keep postponing it. We put it off and our life is just as shabby as it was five years ago. We do not regularly confess our sins. How long do you suppose God is going to put up with this? We reach a plateau in our spiritual life. We cease from confessing sin. We are no longer in tune with God.

Principle

God wants Christians to deal with their sins now.

Application

There was a time when we kept short accounts with God. Christianity was vibrant and alive to us. We shared our faith. Then someone soured us. Someone discouraged us and we lost heart. We stopped an ongoing fellowship with the Lord. We felt justified because we were not appreciated. Since we are not dealing with this now God may have to deal with it.

for judgment to begin at the house of God

"Judgment" here is the persecution Asia Minor Christians were about to undergo. Evidently part of God's design for allowing persecution was to

bring Christians who stepped out of a walk with God back into fellowship (Hebrews 12:6-7).

The phrase "the house of God" refers to the church, or the family of God. God judges the church. This is judgment in time, not eternity. God's judgment of the church is a purifying judgment.

Principle

God judges the church in time, not in eternity.

Application

When the church confesses its sins it is free to enter fellowship again. We have the judicial right to enter that fellowship because of the death of Christ. God is free to forgive because Jesus took the penalty to deal with sin judicially. God not only forgives us in confession but He cleanses us as well (1 John 1:7, 9). God the Father passed judgment on our sins when Christ was on the cross (1 Peter 2:24).

Every sin that we have ever committed has a penalty attached to it. Jesus took that penalty. He took the full wrath of God for sin. That is why we do not have to pay for sin. For us to get back into fellowship, we do not pay penance but simply confess (acknowledge) that that sin took Jesus to the cross.

Confession means I acknowledge the judgment has already been passed on Christ and confession is my recognition of Christ's judgment for my sin. We recognize the judgment by simply confessing sin.

If we feel sorry for sins we punish ourselves. This detracts from the suffering of Christ (Galatians 2:21). We put ourselves in the place of suffering for sin. That is what we call "human works for restoration to fellowship." When Christ hung on the cross the Father accepted the judgment for our sins. Penance is a system of paying for sin. It is a subtle system for intruding on the finished work of Christ.

If we do not confess sin as Christians God will bring us back into fellowship in His own way. Discipline is not a matter of punishment. Jesus already took the punishment. Discipline is a family matter. It is not a question of whether we are in the family it is a matter of our status in the family.

Some people think that they have a special "in" with God. They try to figure out what God likes and then give it to Him. They ante in their 10% in order to get a girl friend. This is not Christianity. This is legalism and religion.

We deal with our sins the same way we did when we became Christians. By faith we accept the finished work of Christ to forgive our sins. We need to realize that God is satisfied with the death of Christ for our sins (propitiation).

Most of us are spiritually flabby. We cater to our flesh. We do not like to buffet our body or to keep it under control (1 Corinthians 9:27). We like to give it free reign. It is human nature to be easy on ourselves. We do not deep short accounts with God. Why not begin today to walk with God by daily confessing your sin?

and if it begins with us first

The "if" of this phrase means God assumes the reality that judgment begins first with the church.

God always begins with His own people. Judgment always begins with God's people. God is in the business of raising children for eternity. He expects us to be a credit to Christ on earth. He does not want His children to bring reproach on the Bible. He expects us to be an example to those without Christ and an asset to the cause of the gospel.

Principle

God will sovereignly intervene into our lives to bring us back to Himself.

Application

If we stand in the way of people coming to Christ, God will do something about that. We may be obstacles to our relatives and neighbors becoming Christians. It may be that some people who know us reject the gospel because of us. They see the irregularities and inconsistencies in our lives. They see our talk outruns our walk and we have more lip than life.

what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?

If there is no question that God disciplines the church then there is no question He will discipline those who reject Him.

The "end" is the final fate of those who do not know Christ. What is the final disposition of those who reject the gospel? The striking question is "What shall the end be?" The Bible answers this clearly -- they will be cast into the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:15). That is the end of non-Christians. What a future for those without Christ!!

"Do not obey" means to refuse to believe. These people deliberately disobey the gospel. The Greek indicates they habitually refuse to believe. When non-Christians see Christians out of fellowship, do they stop associating with the Christian? No. They deliberately reject the message of the Christian.

Principle

Those who turn negative volition to God, God will judge eternally.

Application

If you have never turned positive volition to God's message, God will sovereignly deal with you. God's only solution to the sin question is the death of Jesus for our sin. If we reject that message God has no other alternative but to cast us into the Lake of Fire.

1 Peter 4:18

"Now 'If the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?'"

Now 'If the righteous one is scarcely saved

This verse is an allusion to the Old Testament Greek rendering of Proverbs 11:31.

The "if" assumes reality in the Greek. It is true that Christians have difficulty in being saved. They have a difficult time coming to grips with grace. The gospel itself is not difficult but it is difficult to come to grips with salvation by grace. Faith in Christ is non-meritorious. Most people have a very difficult time dropping their works-orientation to salvation.

The "righteous one" is not a special class of spiritual Christians. The "righteous one" here is the one who has received imputed righteousness from God. Our eternal standing before God does not rest in righteousness of our own. We standing in a righteousness given to us by Christ (1

Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21). Saved people are right with God.

"Scarcely" means with difficulty, hardly.

"Righteous one" is a term for Christians. It is very difficult for Christians to become Christians. Saving sinners is no mean task. It took Jesus to the cross. The reason Jesus went to the cross because men are totally depraved. There is no way we can come to Christ by our own merit. We can barely become Christians. It takes the act of God to save us.

The word "saved" means to receive salvation. We cannot earn salvation; it must be given to us.

Principle

Christians go to heaven only by the work of God Himself in sending Christ to die for our sins.

Application

It takes the work of God to save us. We go to heaven only by the work of Christ. We cannot save ourselves. No merit or human effort makes any impression upon God. Not one of us has any righteousness before God.

"As it is written: 'There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one'" (Romans 3:10-12).

To become a Christian we have to stop working for salvation and accept the work of Christ for our salvation.

"But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness" (Romans 4:5).

Have you come to the place where you reject your own merit for salvation and rest solely on the payment Jesus made on the cross for your sins? Why not make that decision today?

Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?'

The words "ungodly" and "sinner" refer to those without salvation. "Ungodly" means those without God. They are the non-God crowd. There is no God to them. Yet Christ died for no-God, secular people.

"For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die" (Romans 5:6-7).

The second word for those without Christ is "sinner." A sinner is one who falls short of the mark, of God's standards (Romans 3:23). Jesus came into this world to save sinners as well.

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (1 Timothy 1:15).

"Appear" signifies brought to light, become visible. The lost are in a dire situation. There will come a day when it will be obvious they were in negative volition to God. The judgment of the righteous is an ominous harbinger of the judgment of the lost. They exist in a state of damnation. Where shall they appear? They will make an appearance at the Great White Throne Judgment to be pronounced lost forever (Revelation 20:12-15).

"And to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10).

If the righteous need disciplinary judgments, how much more will the judicially unrighteous need eternal judgment. Because they rejected God's message, there will be no question as to the merit of the judgment (Romans 3:10).

Principle

Those without Christ will appear before God to give an account for rejecting Christ as their Savior.

Application

God has a plan whereby the unrighteous can become judicially righteous.

"But now the righteousness of God [not our righteousness] apart from the law [apart from our works or merit] is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God [note emphasis on God's righteousness], through faith [faith is the only means whereby we can become Christians] in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference" (Romans 3:21-22).

"But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies [declares as right as God is right] the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness [God's righteousness], just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes [puts in] righteousness [God's righteousness] apart from works" (Romans 4:5-6).

"Therefore, having been justified [declared as right as God is right] by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

We become judicially or positionally righteous the moment we receive the righteous Son of God (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The die is cast. If you die without Christ there is no hope for you. There is nothing in your future except eternal judgment. It is not material whether you believe that or not. The Bible clearly teaches this. Make your decision for Christ today.

1 Peter 4:19

"Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator."

Therefore

The "therefore" indicates that this is a summary statement for Christians in suffering. This is the punch line of this section of 1 Peter. This is the application of all this teaching on trials. If Christians are not to retaliate what are they to do? Commit.

let those who suffer

Nothing that comes our way arrives by accident (1 Peter 2:20; 3:17). God processes everything in our lives. When Satan came to God to put duress on Job, God had to take down the "hedge" around Job. God has a hedge around each of us. Nothing comes into our lives without going through that hedge. No disaster comes our way without God's

permission. He must concur with any event that enters our lives.

according to the will of God

The words "according to" mean norm or standard. Our suffering must be according to the norm or standard of the will of God.

"Will" means purpose, plan or design. Everything that comes into our lives come by divine design. Nothing comes into our lives that God does not process by His will. If God wills suffering then so be it. It is better to suffer in the will of God than out of it. If God wills something for our lives then He will give us sustaining grace.

Principle

Nothing can happen to us without God concurring with it.

Application

The doctrine of God concurring with the events of our lives is a sadly neglected doctrine today. This doctrine is part of the providence of God. In God's providence He controls all events, all thoughts, all plans for his own glory.

It is reassuring to know life is not capricious and God controls everything in our lives.

commit their souls to Him

"Commit" is an accounting term meaning to deposit. "Commit" carries the ideas of giving or handing over to another, transmitting. We give over our money to the bank. When we give our money to a bank, we put it in charge of keeping it for us. If we deposit our souls with God, He will undertake the superintendence of our souls. When we do this we are no longer in control, He is. Our soul operates on all systems go. Seven verses later he shows us how to do this -- "Cast all our care on the Lord" (5:7). We cannot solve all our problems ourselves. The word "commit" was used in Matthew 26:45 of the handing over of the Son of Man to the control of sinners. They arrested Him and took Him into custody. They placed Him under their authority and control.

"Then He came to His disciples and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man

is being betrayed into the hands of sinners" (Matthew 25:45).

"Commit" is the very word Jesus used on the cross when He said, "I commit my spirit."

"And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, 'Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit'" (Luke 23:46). "Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have redeemed me, O LORD God of truth" (Psalm 31:5).

Principle

It is God's desire that we deposit our trials to His care and charge.

Application

Put trials in perspective. God is working through them in His own divine design. Can you trust that? We need to know that God uses suffering to mature us.

Banks are well equipped to take care of our money. If we keep our money under the mattress, there is a good possibility that someone might steal it. The moment we take the money to the bank, our fears are over.

When we commit our souls to God, we grant Him the opportunity to do something with them. We hand over the control of our lives to Him.

in doing good

The term "doing good" means to benefit others. When we actively live out the Christian life, even under extreme duress, we benefit others. God uses our commitment to Him to bless others. He will do something good with our lives when we deposit them with Him.

By doing good, no matter the circumstance, we live to the challenge of Christ,

"But I say to you who hear: 'Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you'" (Luke 6:27-28).

"Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.' And they divided His garments and cast lots" (Luke 23:24).

Remember Stephen's example,

"And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud

voice, 'Lord, do not charge them with this sin.' And when he had said this, he fell asleep" (Acts 7:59-60).

Principle

Good orientation to others implies the acceptance of God's sovereignty in our lives.

Application

It is easy to allow persecution to become an excuse for wrongdoing. It is easy to excuse deviance because of the difficulties of our lives. Often people enter apostasy out of rebellion against God because of trials that come their way.

Confidence in God's plan for our lives, no matter what we may face, is a sign of mature understanding of God's working. Understanding the sovereignty of God in the midst of pain is the ultimate answer for "why" things happen to us.

as to a faithful Creator

We can trust God to be true and reliable (1 John 1:9). We can place our full confidence in Him because He is worthy of our belief and trust. God is dependable and reliable.

"Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23).

"God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:9).

"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

"But as God is faithful, our word to you was not Yes and No" (2 Corinthians 1:18).

"He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

"If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself" (2 Timothy 2:13).

"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful" (Hebrews 10:23).

"By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she

was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised" (Hebrews 11:11).

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

"Faithful Creator" points to His promises and character. God will fulfill His promises without fail. Men make promises they cannot keep because they are neither dependable nor able to carry them out. As our Creator, God is responsible to maintain what He created. He is dependable. We can "bank" on Him!

Principle

We can commit ourselves to God because He is faithful.

Application

We can trust God to do right in the end. We can give the destiny of our lives to God for safekeeping. If we can trust Him with our eternal life, why cannot we trust Him with our temporal life? God will not fail us if we trust Him. If we can trust men with responsibility, how much more God?

Our souls are "in good hands." Child of God, if you suffer today, if your body is racked with pain, if you are discouraged, depressed and distressed, if you are at the extremity of your situation, put your soul in God's hands. He is a good banker. He will take care of His own. He will sustain you and enable you. He will see you through.

1 Peter 5:1

"The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed."

We now come to a new section of 1 Peter dealing with the issues of leadership and "followership." Leadership covers the first four verses. Verses five through eleven take up "followership." With verse one Peter begins a section on how believers are to live in the Christian community. First, he deals with how the leaders are to operate in the church.

The elders

We often interpret the word "elders" too technically as officials in the local church. The

basic meaning of the word "elder" is simply leadership. A biblical leader is a spiritually mature believer who has the ability to plan, strategize, recruit other leaders and develop them. In some cases elder implies an official title but in many cases it simply means a leader (1 Timothy 5:17,19; Titus 1:5).

"Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine" (1 Timothy 5:17).

A great many Christians do not acknowledge the idea that anyone is over them in the Lord. They do not accept spiritual authority. They are spiritual anarchists. That is why some Christians need "admonishing."

"Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." ... "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." ... "Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you" (Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24).

The word "elder" refers to maturity and character of leadership (Titus 1:5-9). In 1 Timothy and Titus we find 24 qualifications needed for elders to lead the church of God.

who are among you

God never leaves a community of believers without leadership.

Principle

The spiritual health of a local church depends on the authority of leadership in that church.

Application

When a church is in a state of anarchy, that church is trouble. It will eventually stop winning and discipling people for Christ.

The primary indication of a healthy church is a pastor who can be a catalyst for evangelism and discipleship. Congregations that experience this kind of leadership are the first to recognize the value of balanced authority. However, the pastor earns this authority by love from the congregation.

This kind of leadership is not authoritarianism or totalitarianism as we will see in this passage (5:3). The body of believers must recognize this leadership by the leader earning this right to lead.

There is an illusion that the congregation can exercise some kind of corporate leadership. People with this idea oppose strong pastoral leadership on the principle of a perceived democratic assumption. God never asserts that assumption in the Bible, however. It seems undemocratic to these people [without biblical support] that a pastor should have authority.

Strong congregationalists do not allow their pastors to think creatively, build constructs for ministry, or establish goals and strategies without their permission. In this system, there is no room for strong, inspiring or centralized leadership. Whether we like it or not, centralized leadership is the key to church growth. A pastor who tries to lead a church without this system will face great frustration. His energies will drain away as he tries to go uphill against the system.

It is amazing that though people understand leadership in business, their minds shut down to the principle of good leadership when they go to church. The board of directors of a corporation, if they are wise, does not attempt to lead the organization. They leave the planning and the execution of the plan to full-time executives. Yet, in churches it is often the board that tries to plan and execute plans. No wonder many churches are dead in the water! The role of the board is to approve basic policy and protect the assumptions and doctrine of the church.

Does this mean that the pastor is a dictator? No, the church hires him and the church can fire him. He reports to the board and the board reserves the right to overrule his plans. His plan will not be effective if the congregation does not support his proposals by action. Also, a pastor is an "under-shepherd." His real authority is from the ultimate Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ.

A wise leader will pull lay leadership to himself and push authority back to his lay people to carry out the vision and plans of the church. In other words, it is both biblical and practical to accept the authority of the leaders of the local church.

"And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves" (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).

I exhort

"Exhort" means to encourage or exhort. Most pastors need both encouragement and exhortation. "Exhort" is the probable meaning here. The pastors in Asia Minor needed exhortation follow some issues of leadership found in vv. 2-4 due to the duress they were facing from Rome.

I who am a fellow elder

Peter views himself as a "fellow elder." He does not pull rank with his fellow elders. In 1:1 and 2 Peter 2:1 he identifies himself as "an apostle of Jesus Christ." An apostle holds authority above an elder. Apostleship is the ultimate authority for the church. For example, only an apostle has the right to write Scripture.

Peter establishes his authority as a leader by calling himself an "elder" and a "witness" to the sufferings of Christ. He did not usurp authority as the ultimate elder.

and a witness of the sufferings of Christ

"Witness" means to testify. "Witness" does not refer to the act of seeing but to the act of testifying to what one has seen. Peter was an eyewitness to the suffering of Christ (2:21; 4:1). Peter personally saw Jesus bound and led away for judgment. He followed Jesus into the courtyard. No doubt he saw Jesus crucified. Peter personally witnessed and testified to the passion of Christ. He spent the rest of his life telling others about his wonderful Savior.

and also a partaker of the glory

"The glory" is the Second Advent of Christ. This will be the day of Jesus' great triumph over the world. He will be King Jesus, King of the world. Note that Peter combines the sufferings and the glory of Christ in 1:11. The sufferings of Christ is the first advent and the glory of Christ is the Second Advent (Romans 8:16-19). Our glory lies ahead. Peter makes this same point in 4:13 that

those who share in Christ's suffering will share in his glory.

that will be

The words "will be" mean to be about to. Peter talks about the "about to be revealed glory." Peter wants to share issues of the Second Advent.

The word "will be" means to be inevitable, with respect to future developments.

"But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands" (Matthew 17:12).

The Second Advent is an inevitable event. revealed

"Revealed" means to uncover, to take out of hiding. "Revealed" refers to the future second coming in glory of the Lord Jesus,

"Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed" (Luke 17:30).

Principle

The ultimate glory of the Christian still lies ahead.

Application

All Christians will "partake" of the glory of the Second Advent. This will be a day of great rejoicing. All the pain we face now will be over. We will see Jesus in all of his glory. What a day that will be!!

1 Peter 5:2

"Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly."

Shepherd

Shepherd means to tend, cherish, herd, tend, (lead to) pasture with the implication of providing for the sheep. This word carries the ideas of lead, rule, guide. The shepherd rules with the idea of guiding and helping the sheep. A shepherd protects, rules, governs, fosters protection, cares for and nurtures.

Jesus was a Shepherd (Matthew 2:6). Those who act as spiritual shepherds under him tend their flocks as under-shepherds (John 21:16; Acts 20:28).

"Shepherd" covers more than just feeding the flock. It includes all that involves tending. Everything that a shepherd does the pastor does. This entails discipline of sheep who go astray, authority, restoration, material assistance and feeding. This is the spiritual care of God's children. So shepherding involves all that falls to the shepherd's lot to do for the sheep.

"Shepherd" is translated "rule" in the book of Revelation.

"He shall rule them with a rod of iron" (Revelation 2:27).

"She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne" (Revelation 12:5).

"Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" (Revelation 9:15).

The noun form of "shepherd" is "pastor." Pastor means shepherd.

"And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers" (Ephesians 4:11).

the flock of God which is among you,

The "flock of God" is the church. Sheep are defenseless and liable to stray. Nero is about to send his legions so pastors must go on a crash program to protect their flocks. Pastors must use both ends of their staff [rod]. They need to care and they need to discipline. The crook has two ends:

1) the hook end pulls sheep out of holes, 2) the pointed end pokes sheep in the right direction and away from danger or false doctrine.

Although the church is God's flock, God does not feed them directly. He uses pastors to do that. The flock needs more than food; pastors must tend them.

Principle

A pastor's role includes both toughness and tenderness.

Application

God has one paramount, primary and indispensable directive to the pastor: "Feed the flock of God." If the pastor is not feeding his people then he is not doing the will of God.

With some sheep, the pastor needs to be tender. They are mature believers who understand the importance of inculcating the Word into their lives. They have great reverence for the Word. They appropriate the Word to their experience.

On the other hand, some sheep have hard heads. They operate on negative volition toward the Word. They need discipline. Some sheep need more correction than sweetness because of their negativity toward the Word. If they become negative, the pastor with integrity will challenge them.

A leader does not have to have a certain type of personality. In other words, personality is not an issue in leadership. People make a major mistake when they choose a pastor based on personality, or qualities that they personally admire. Suppose someone admires the quiet type and someone else admires the noisy type. This choice is simply a matter of preference. There is no biblical standard in this process of choosing a pastor. If a congregation chooses the mouse, they will use him as a bean-bag kicking him around until they get tired of him. In the New Testament, it was the leaders who did the kicking!!

Under conditions of catastrophe, pastors must assert their authority more than they would in normal circumstances. Many pastors fear this. They are not willing to sacrifice their image of a "nice" person for the sake of their church. They are more concerned about acceptance by people than honoring their Lord.

Part of pastoring is feeding the sheep. Sheep cannot grow unless they ingest food. This is the source of their spiritual energy. Many sheep get indigestion from the Word because they have been feeding on poison. They cannot absorb good food because of their diet. False doctrine is toxic to spiritual health. Spiritual nutrition is preventive medicine.

servicing as overseers,

"Overseer" comes from two Greek words: over and see. An overseer is one who has responsibility for the care of someone, implying an official responsibility within a congregation probably referring to the pastor. He ministers to and is responsible for the care of the local church.

"I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me" (Matthew 25:43).

This word carries such ideas as review, inspect and examine. The pastor looks over his congregation for inspection. An "overseer" looks after and cares for the congregation's direction. An overseer is a leader who has a responsibility to care for the church. His task is oversight.

"This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work" (1 Timothy 3:1).

"For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls" (1 Peter 2:25).

We get our word Episcopal from the word "overseer." The pastor is to exercise oversight for his church. Every pastor must discharge this duty. This word conveys an injunction for polity for the local church. "Overseers" implies authority. No pastor can pastor without authority. Three negative clauses that follow qualify how he is to use his authority.

An overseer is a church leader who is in charge of God's work and should be without fault,

"For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money" (Titus 1:7).

Principle

Pastors must take the initiative of leading their churches.

Application

Pastors must take the oversight of their churches. It is not enough to defer to the board for this.

Sheep get sick when not sheared regularly. If the shepherd does not cut off their wool then they will not be healthy. Sometimes the shepherd nicks

sheep in the process of shearing. After being sheared, they look thin and some even bleed. If a novice shears the sheep, it can be a particularly bloody affair. The pastor needs to remember that the sheep belong to the "Chief Shepherd," who is the "Chief Pastor."

No pastor should assume authority unless he has a sense of responsibility and fairness. A pastor can shear sheep many times but can only skin them once. Some people love authority because it stimulates their power lust.

Some sheep do not want any supervision. They are spiritual anarchists. They are a law unto themselves. They do not permit anyone to have authority over them.

"Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you" (Hebrews 13:17).

No pastor should preach the Word out of fear or favor of people. He is not in the business of a popularity contest.

Three negatives follow as qualifications to shepherding. Each negative is followed by a positive contrast by using the word "but."

not by compulsion

Some people are in the pastorate out of obligation rather than from a heart's desire to do the will of God. The person who serves the sheep of God under coercion is a resentful person. This shepherd will never serve his sheep properly. A true shepherd serves, not because he must, but because he wants to make an impact on their lives. No one should draft a pastor into the ministry. The pastor should volunteer without anyone needing to urge him. To him the ministry is no burden.

"For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died" (2 Corinthians 5:14).

Some of the pastors in Asia Minor felt it was a good career move to go into the pastorate. They went into ministry to benefit their image in the community.

The pastor who must be shanghaied into the job while he drags his feet is not in God's will. In the

army the widespread scuttlebutt is, "Don't volunteer for anything." The Christian army has many generals of these types. They volunteer for and initiate very little.

but willingly

"Willingly" means without compulsion, deliberately, intentionally, voluntarily. This person leads his congregation without being forced or pressured into leadership. He leads his congregation of his own free will. No one imposes this desire on him. Leadership is in his heart.

"But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary" (Philemon 14).

"For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship" (1 Corinthians 9:16-17).

Ministry requires deliberate intention. Pastors must be purpose-driven. He serves not because he must but because he wants to make an impact for Christ. Therefore, leadership is no grim and unpleasant duty to him.

according to [the norm or standard] of God

The New King James Version does not translate this phrase.

The pastor needs to operate on the same standard of leadership that God does. He should have the same spirit as God as in leading his flock. Eagerness of the fleshly leadership will not do. He leads his church as God would have him pastor the church.

Principle

No pastor should do his pastoring as a job.

Application

No pastor should lead because it is his job. He does not lead because he has to do it. He does not do it because he someone forces him into it. He eagerly and enthusiastically assumes the initiative for the direction of his flock.

No pastor should serve as pastor unless God has called him. No one should pressure someone to go

into the pastorate. The mother who wants her son to be a preacher probably does not realize the pressure nor the capacity for leadership that is necessary for the pastorate.

The pastor forced into serving will not be an effective leader. If he leads by obligation, he will not be creative and will not have vision. He will not see the potential for his ministry. An unwilling servant who operates by imposition will not be effective.

Any pastor who has a pure heart accepts the pastorate with some reluctance. He knows his own unworthiness for such a high office. He knows his inadequacy for such a role. However, he also knows that God is sufficient to enable him to serve as pastor.

not for dishonest gain

Some people in ministry are in it for the money. Greed is their motivation for ministry. "Dishonest gain" is any personal gain sought in a selfish way. No pastor should commercialize his ministry. God does not want us to put a price tag on our ministry.

"Dishonest gain" occurs only five times in the New Testament.

"Not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous" (1 Timothy 3:3).

"Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money" (1 Timothy 3:8).

"For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money" (Titus 1:7).

"Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain" (Titus 1:11).

It is interesting that all five uses of this term refer to Christian leadership. The pastor who is eager for a large salary prostitutes the ministry to low purposes. He commercializes his ministry by selling benefits.

Lest we ever interpret this to mean that we should not pay pastors adequately, there is another side to this story. The Bible not only allows for pastors to

receive pay but it insists that they have the right of remuneration.

"If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ. Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar? Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:11-14).

but eagerly

There are two words for "willing" in this verse: "willingly" and "eagerly." The latter term is a strong word implying far more desire.

"Eagerly" means predisposed, a readiness of mind coming from two words: before and mind. This pastor's mind is predisposed beforehand to lead. He prepares his mind beforehand to take the initiative to lead. There is a mental condition of readiness and willingness to lead. He gladly initiates executive action because he anticipates the needs of his congregation. The true pastor carries within himself the predisposition to lead.

"Eagerly" means that this pastor is so predisposed to ministry that he is eager to do what he does. He is ready and willing to serve Jesus Christ.

"So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also" (Romans 1:15).

A true pastor desires to give, not get. He selflessly and sacrificially cares for his flock.

Principle

The pastor should lead and feed the flock, not fleece it.

Application

The pastor who seeks personal gain from the ministry is not a purpose-driven pastor. He is self-driven. A pastor who serves from the motivation of greed is out of the will of God.

A predisposed mind is a spontaneous mind. His heart orientation is to preach. As well, he should orient his heart toward leadership.

1 Peter 5:3

"Nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock."

nor as being lords over

We come now to the third negative phrase that qualifies the leadership of a pastor -- pastors should not become dictators over their congregations.

The phrase "being lords over" means become master, gain dominion over, subdue with the implication of lording it over. God does not give the pastor the right to rule or reign over their congregations. A pastor has the right to rule as we saw in previous studies but he does not have the right to lord his authority over his congregation, as a king would reign over an empire. The pastor is not to be in the business of wielding power and subduing his congregation by superior force.

"Being lords over" conveys the idea of a domineering pastor who takes advantage of weak people (cf. Matthew 20:25; Mark 10:42; Acts 19:16). The pastor is not to exercise lordship over his congregation.

The words "lord over" imply ruling to one's own advantage in Mark 10:42 (Gentile rulers)

"And He said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors'' (Luke 22:25).

Ezekiel warns of this kind of leader: "You have ruled them harshly and brutally. So they were scattered because there was no shepherd" (Ezekiel 34:4-5). Some leaders tyrannize their people by coercive means (Matthew 20:25-26; 2 Corinthians 1:24).

The people of a church are God's flock and God's heritage. The pastor should treat them accordingly. The pastor is simply the under-shepherd who cares for the flock of another.

"Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand" (2 Corinthians 1:24).

A pastor who becomes a tyrant steps outside his God-ordained authority. Diotrefes loved power. He operated with a high hand.

"I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church" (3 John 1:9-10).

There is a proper exercised authority and a proper honor of that authority.

"And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves" (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).

"Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,' and, 'The laborer is worthy of his wages'" (1 Timothy 5:17-18).

Principle

God does not want the pastor to bully his flock.

Application

A pastor should not dominate his people. No pastor should abuse his authority. God wants him to be fair in his leadership of his flock. The issue here is whether the pastor is unjust and unfair in use of his authority. Does he use his authority out of a lust for power? No pastor should use his authority to express vindictiveness.

Every pastor faces two extremes, either he:

1) lets congregation run over him 2) or, he bullies the congregation.

No pastor should fear his authority. He should "rule" because God wants him to rule. However, there is great danger in power as we have seen by so many who have abused that power.

those entrusted to you,

The word "entrusted" is literally "a lot,"

"And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles" (Acts 1:26).

The secular Greek used this word for an allotment of land assigned to a citizen by civic authorities.

God portions a certain group of people to the pastor. This "lot" is the sphere of his pastoral care.

The Greek word means something allotted to the pastor. It is something specially assigned to him. God specially assigns congregations to pastors. The congregation is his sphere of service. He never earns or deserves this "lot." God gives each congregation to each pastor out of his grace. No pastor deserves his congregation. God is the source of the allotting process. God gives it by his grace.

God especially allotted Israel to himself. God assigns them to his own will and choice.

"Yet they are Your people and Your inheritance [same word], whom You brought out by Your mighty power and by Your outstretched arm" (Deuteronomy 9:29).

Principle

Each pastor obtains his congregation by God's grace.

Application

God assigns the congregation as the responsibility of the pastor to take care of them. The congregation is not his but God's. His responsibility is to care for them as a steward. He does not have the prerogative to lord it over those who are God's people. God has the privilege of Lordship.

The congregation is not his, but his to manage. The pastor is the under-shepherd. The true shepherd is the Chief Shepherd, the Chief Pastor (1 Peter 5:4). The under-shepherd must give account to the Chief Shepherd. The under-pastor must give account to the Chief Pastor. The under-shepherd is simply a steward, a manager of someone else's property.

No pastor should be pontifical or dictatorial. He dare not strut or swagger. A pastor should guard against taking on an air of infallibility.

but being examples to the flock

An "example" was a visible impression of a stroke. Therefore, it is a mark (i.e. an impression left by a blow). The New

Testament uses this word for the mark of the nails in Jesus hands after the crucifixion,

"The other disciples therefore said to him, 'We have seen the Lord.' So he said to them, 'Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe'" (John 20:25).

An "example" then is a copy, image, pattern, the effect of a blow, the print or impress of a seal general form or character, the type or model of a thing.

In the context of a relationship between leaders and followers, Christian leaders are to serve as models for people to follow. They are to be modeled or patterned, much like an "example." Christian leaders follow as well. They follow their Archetype, for they are of the same kind, class, and type as He is. Jesus is the model and pattern for Christian leaders.

"But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered" (Romans 6:17).

"Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as He appointed, instructing Moses to make it according to the pattern that he had seen" (Acts 7:44).

"Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted" (1 Corinthians 10:6).

"Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern" (Philippians 3:17).

"So that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe" (1Thessalonians 1:7).

"Not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us" (2 Thessalonians 3:9).

"Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12).

Christian leaders are not to drive God's people, but to lead them by their examples of mature Christian character.

Principle

A pastor motivates from within, and by his example.

Application

As no one can drive a pastor into leadership by coercion from without, no one can drive the congregation by external pressure either.

The greatest power of a leader is his own integrity and capacity. The reason he cannot lord it over his people is simply because he is not Lord. Even the Lord did not coerce his people. He motivated them through integrity and love. Leaders are most effective when they demonstrate how to face trial and testing. Complainers shut their mouths to such testimony. This is a big order for a pastor.

"Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1).

"Imitate" is the Greek word mimic. "Be mimics of me." We can often learn more from what we see than by what we hear. We have a wonderful Lord and he proves himself over and over again.

"Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12).

"In all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you" (Titus 2:7-8).

A biblical leader is not a boss who commands, dominates, manipulates and coerces his people. He does not operate by leverage but by service,

"But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, 'You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them [same Greek word as in our passage], and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant'" (Mark 10:42-43).

1 Peter 5:4

"And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away."

and when the Chief Shepherd appears,

The New Testament uses the title "Chief Shepherd" only of the Lord Jesus. Jesus is the Head Shepherd, the Chief Pastor. The Head Shepherd directs the activities of other shepherds

[pastors]. The word "chief" carries the idea of preeminence.

The primary meaning of "appears" is to make visible, clear, manifest, known. The essential meaning is to uncover, lay bare or reveal. The word "appears" refers to the manifestation of the Lord Jesus at the Second Advent. Then he will show all the glory that He truly possesses. The word "manifestation" is stronger than the word "appear." A person may appear without true disclosure of his true character. Jesus will come in full divulgence of His character.

"He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (1 Peter 1:20).

"Therefore, although I wrote to you, I did not do it for the sake of him who had done the wrong, nor for the sake of him who suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear to you" (2 Corinthians 7:12).

"When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory" (Colossians 3:4).

"And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (1 John 2:28).

"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2).

Principle

When Jesus comes, He will fully disclose everything and reward true faithfulness.

Application

The Chief Pastor is coming back (1:7). When He comes, He will bring rewards with Him -- crowns (Revelation 22:12). When the Chief Pastor shows Himself, He will expose everything. If a pastor did not take the leadership (vv.2-3) anarchy resulted. He was not faithful to the flock. If everyone is the leading, no one is a leader.

There are special rewards for leadership. Christian leaders will receive special rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ. We do not realize our rewards for leading in this life. It is difficult to

serve sometimes when no one recognizes our contribution. Some Christian leaders serve in obscurity with little human recognition.

But Jesus will personally reward these leaders. The Chief Pastor will personally reward the under-pastors. No human organization will give the final applause.

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Jesus will reward leaders with an unfading crown of glory. At that final day the Lord will say, "I want you to reign with me. You did a fine job leading on earth in time, now in eternity I want you to reign with me forever." That will be our reward.

Pastors need to keep in mind that they are not the Chief Pastor. If a pastor begins to think that he is the Chief Pastor, he starts to play God. The ultimate Shepherd and Bishop of our souls is the Lord Jesus (2:25).

"Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen" (Hebrews 13:20- 21).

you will receive

"You will" implies the future. At some future point, the leadership of the local church will receive a "crown." The "crown of glory" is a crown specially designed for pastoral leadership. There is a special reward for faithfulness to a congregation.

The word "receive" means to bear, carry (Luke 7:37). It comes to mean in this verse to bear for oneself, hence to receive. The idea is "Your faithfulness to your congregation will bring to yourself the fadeless crown of glory."

Sometimes "receive" means requital. We will receive back again at the Judgment Seat of Christ what we have done in time for Christ. Jesus will repay us for what we do for him.

"But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality" (Colossians 3:25).

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

"For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise" (Hebrews 10:36).

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Hebrews 11:13).

Principle

The Chief Pastor is coming back to reward the under-pastors.

Application

One day, pastors will stand before the Chief Pastor to receive the crown of glory for faithfulness to their congregations that will not fade away. This is a major incentive to serve our congregation faithfully. The simple question he will ask is, "Was I faithful to my flock?"

This passage promises reward to pastors who faithfully serve their congregations. Are you going to receive a "full reward" for giving everything you could to your congregation? (2 John 1:8). Will you receive a half reward? A quarter reward? No reward?

"According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire" (1 Corinthians 3:10-15).

the crown of glory

Pastors will receive an unfading crown of glory for faithfulness to their congregations. A crown of victory was awarded after the Greek athletic games-usually a crown of woven ivy or oak leaves.

There are also crowns for other Christians and for other reasons:

for witnessing, 1 Thessalonians 2:19, Philippians 4:1 for faithfulness, 2 Timothy 4:8 for enduring trials, James 1:12 for discipline, 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

that does not fade away

"Fades not" primarily signifies something that does not lose its initial pristine character. This word was used of the amaranth flower, a flower that does not fade but retains its brightness and wonderful character. So too the pastor's crown for faithfulness to his congregation will never fade away. God will make sure that his work is remembered into eternity.

This phrase "does not fade away" appears in the first chapter of our inheritance of heaven,

"To an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:4).

Principle

God rewards pastors eternally for faithfulness to their congregation.

Application

Is your ambition as a pastor to stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ with a crown of glory on your head? Will you stand there bareheaded?

"I finished first but I did not get a first place prize, nor even second place." It is not a matter of merely finishing the race but it is an issue of how well we ran the race. If we foul another runner on the far turn, Jesus will see it and disqualify us from a victor's wreath.

In heaven, we will cast our crowns before the Lord. When God gives the signal to throw our crowns down, will we have a crown to throw? We work for them here, we receive them hereafter.

"The twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: 'You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created'" (Revelation 4:10-11).

There are crowns to be won and races to be won. This is not fictional but factual. Every pastor will finish the race but who desires to finish fourth? No one. We must run to get a medal. We will get a medal if we put in a splendid performance. If we are going to turn in a stellar performance, we had better get in shape. If there is anything pastors seem to resist today, it is discipline. We do not want to train; it is too much work. The reason some people play right end on the bench is their lack of discipline.

"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified" (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

Some pastors are happy just to make the squad. Do you want to be on the field and involved in the game? To warm the bench is anything but gratifying. Why is it that so many of God's leaders seem content to ride the bench? They would rather sit there wrapped in a blanket and watch someone else play the game and score the points. Every once in a while they get a little excited and stand up and cheer. Then the blanket falls off feeling a draft, they are concerned only about recovering their blanket.

When we come to the end of life's short day there will be no further opportunities to live for Christ in time. You had your chance. You had your opportunity. Did you take advantage of it?

1 Peter 5:5

"Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for

'God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.'"

In the first four verses, Peter addresses his remarks to the leadership of the local church. Now he addresses his remarks to the congregation. There are two different crowds in the opening verses of 1 Peter 5:

1) those that rule over (5:1-4) and 2) the "younger" -- all the saints, the rank and file Christians (5:5f).

Turning to the function of the congregation, Peter now makes the point that a congregation cannot function properly without a recognition of authority. This passage is dedicated to those of you who do not believe that the church should have authority in their lives. God sets up principles of authority in all aspects of our lives. In fact, there is little difference between the church and a military organization, a business organization or a successful athletic team in this respect. Before you can have a dynamic church, it must understand authority (1 Thessalonians 5:12; Hebrews 13:7,17).

Likewise you3 younger people

"Likewise" connects the previous section (5:1-4) with this section. Peter challenges another category of people to responsibility.

Peter sets the words "younger people" in parallelism to "elders" of the first verse with the word "likewise." By paralleling the words "younger people" to the "elders" of verse one, we understand that "younger" refers to the congregation. As "elders" does not primarily mean older in age but higher in authority, so "younger" does not mean younger in age but lower in authority. "Younger" deals with rank, not age in this context.

While the first four verses talk about leadership, these verses consider people who follow. The Greek word "younger" carries nuances of fresh or new. "Younger" here probably means new converts or those newly under authority of elders. So then, these are people under the authority of the leaders of the congregation.

Principle

People in any congregation are under the authority of their leaders.

Application

Excuses that reject the authority of leadership in the church are not valid with the Lord. These excuses include: "I could not get along with the leadership of the church," "I did not like the pastor," "I did not feel appreciated by the leadership."

Many of us do not get involved in the local church because we reject the idea of someone in authority over us. However, authority is essential for advancing the gospel. Leaders establish the goals for advancing the gospel. Members of the congregation must accept those goals to move the church forward. We must get involved. Just because we can't do everything, it does not mean that we can't do something.

submit yourselves to your elders.

"Submit" means to subordinate. The grammar also indicates that "submit" means to "allow" yourselves [passive voice] to be subordinate to the leaders of the local church. Evidently, there were people in Asia Minor churches who did not submit themselves to the authority of their leaders. Peter's solution to the problem is decisive submission [aorist imperative] to authority. God wants those in subordination to obey the leadership of the church.

Peter had already prescribed that Christians as a whole to submit to government (2:13-14), that slaves submit to their masters (2:18) and wives submit to their husbands (3:1). No organization can function without authority. No organization can have two equal heads or leaders without causing severe problems. Conflict always comes at the point of crucial decisions. An army cannot have two Major Generals commanding the same division. If the church has two heads, confusion will result.

Principle

The church cannot function properly without authority.

Application

People who cannot submit to the leadership of the local church, find themselves miserable and

pondering a church split. Submission to "elders" makes for a well run church.

Self-discipline is the basis of authority. Discipline is necessary for every area of life. The most consistent athletes are self-disciplined.

It is amazing how many people think that the church should operate without authority. "No one has a right to have authority over me in the local church" they say people revolt against authority in the local church because they are not self-disciplined in the first place and do not recognize the intrinsic value of authority.

Yes, all of you be submissive to one another

Both members of the congregation and leaders are to submit to one another. Can you yield to someone else? Can you concede to someone else's argument? The Lord Jesus was among other things, a servant,

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

"Saying, 'Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done'" (Luke 22:42).

Principle

God expects Christians to give in to one another.

Application

Often we expect people to cater to us but are not willing to cater to them. But when we submit to someone else, we want to be a blessing to them. We will go out of our way to help them. We do not expect them to cater to us.

When we operate in this way, we seldom get hurt because we do not expect anything in return. Do you get hurt easily? Perhaps you expect too much from other people and too little from yourself. If you decide to be a blessing to others, God will honor your commitment.

"Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another" (Romans 12:10).

When you offer your smile and friendship to others but they do not return the favor, recall that a servant demands nothing in return. Therefore,

rejection should not bother you and you are protected from hurt.

"For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith" (Romans 12:3).

"Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion" (Romans 12:16).

"Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (Philippians 2:3-4).

and be clothed

"Be clothed" is not the ordinary expression for clothing oneself. This is the only occurrence of this word in the New Testament. It comes from two words: in and tie with a knot, roll band or towel. It means to "engird yourselves." "Clothed" means to tie clothing to oneself with a broad belt. The clothing here is humility. Dress yourself with humility. Gird yourself with humility.

One purpose of a girdle is to control fat from bouncing around and to bring fat under control. Here, we are to bring our minds under control. Humility needs to be bound to oneself because humility does not come to us naturally.

Eventually "clothed" means to coordinate your clothing. "Dress in a coordinated manner." If a person does this, they turn out to be a human being! This is not talking simply about coordinating our clothes but coordinating our lives with humility. If we dress with our shirt-tails out, we do not coordinate our clothing. God is not talking about tucking in our shirts but gathering humility into our thinking.

Metaphorically, "clothed" may mean to make humility our essential characteristic. Humility, therefore, is to be a decisive mark of Christian conduct.

with humility

Humility means to have lowliness of mind. God wants us to obey God-ordained leadership in the local church. Peace in the church comes from low-

mindedness toward God first, then toward each other. This is especially true for the suffering church. God wants the church to regard the coming sufferings as from His sovereign will. We should follow in the footsteps of Him who endured suffering (Hebrews 12:1-12). Leadership can orient the church toward this thinking.

"Humility" is primarily that which is low, and does not rise far from the ground, lowly, humble. A humble person is unpretentious.

"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:29).

"Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ--who in presence am lowly among you, but being absent am bold toward you" (2 Corinthians 10:1).

This is contrary to our fleshly thinking. We want to be number one but the humble mind recognizes others above ourselves (Philippians 2:3, 8; Colossians 3:12) and God first.

for God resists

The word "resists" is a military term. Secular Greek used "resists" of an army drawn up for battle. God will assemble his resources against the proud believer. God will set himself as an adversary and block the proud process.

"Resists" means to set against, to stand against. The word comes from the same root as the word "submit." In other words, "resist" is a play on the word "submit." "Submit" means to fall in line under. "Resists" means God gets in rank against proud people. God resists those who reject the authority of the leadership of the local church.

Paul uses this word "resists" of Peter, the author of this epistle,

"Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed" (Galatians 2:11).

the proud

"Proud" comes from two words: above and to appear. The word "proud" means to show above, appear over. He appears above others (Luke 1:51; Romans 1:30; 2 Timothy 3:2; James 4:6). He is

arrogant, disdainful and proud. He is overweening and ostentatiously proud.

This person loves to play king of the mountain gaining the ascendancy over other people. He does not recognize that what he has, he has from God. Because of his pride, he does not accept the authority of the leadership of the local church. He is anti-establishment in his sentiment.

The proud person is someone who shows himself above others. He views himself as pre-eminent. He feels he is above others.

This person is haughty (Romans 1:30; 2 Timothy 3:2). God sets the haughty in opposition to the humble,

"But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: 'God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble'" (James 4:6).

Principle

God will block proud people who do not submit to the authority of the local church.

Application

The proud person is the person who cannot accept authority in the local church. God resists those who resist the authority of the local church. If you line up against the pastor, God will line up against you!

God withstands and opposes the proud. He sets himself against the arrogance of people who do not accept authority in the local church.

Pride is the first on a list of things God hates:

"These six things the Lord hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren" (Proverbs 6:16-19).

But gives grace to the humble

The negative side of this verse is "God resists the proud." The positive side is he "gives grace to the humble." Lack of humility may explain why we do not have enough grace. We are not humble, so we do not get grace.

"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

God gives grace to the humble because the humble person recognizes that everything depends who God is and what He does. The word "gives" means that God keeps on giving grace to the humble person, the person who has no illusions about himself and understands that what he has, he has from God.

Grace is unmerited blessing, God's provision for us that we do not deserve. A humble person is a good receiver. He willingly confesses his need to receive something from God.

"Before destruction the heart of a man is haughty, And before honor is humility" (Proverbs 18:12).

Before we can receive honor, we must come to the point of humility. If we never come to the point of humility, we will never come to the point of honor. Samuel speaking to Saul said,

"So Samuel said, 'When you were little in your own eyes, were you not head of the tribes of Israel? And did not the LORD anoint you king over Israel?'" (1 Samuel 15:17).

Saul magnified himself in his own eyes and we magnify ourselves in our eyes. We generally have an inflated, exaggerated estimation of our ability. Because others do not share that same exaggerated estimation of ourselves, we feel dejected. Our feelings are hurt and we say, "People do not appreciate me." This is a special occupational hazard with preachers. It goes with the job.

We will get no cooperation from God when it comes to pride. Most of us struggle with pride all our lives. Invariably we are proud about things we have no business being proud about: pride of race, pride of face, pride of grace. The Devil has much to do with pride:

"Not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil" (1 Timothy 3:6).

In this context, God gives grace to the congregation who submits to its leadership. If a congregation has no illusions about itself, God will bless it. If we focus our eyes on leadership, we will fall flat on our faces. What do you expect of your pastor? Do you expect him to be someone

who never makes a mistake? That is what many people expect. They want a preacher who never sins. Pride resists and rejects the authority of the leadership of the local church. The "humble" person is the person who looks to the grace of God's provisions.

Pride = God resists Humble = God recognizes

Principle

God gives grace to people who recognize their need for God.

Application

Some people have the idea that being humble is the equivalent of being someone's doormat. But denying humility is not pretending to be blind to our strong points. There is no humility in disowning that we can do certain things. Similarly, it is not pride to believe that we can do certain things with excellence. Humility has to do with knowing the source of our strength.

If someone says, "Hey, that was a great sermon," what is the pastor supposed to say, "Yea, that was a great sermon!!" No leader has ever gone without some compliments in his life. It is somewhat phony to say, "Give God the credit, brother!" This may be sincere but rude. However, the worst thing that can happen you is to believe it. When a leader starts believing his clippings, he is in danger of God resisting him. The humble believer has no illusion about himself and no illusions about anyone else except the Lord.

A humble person does not demand respect from others. This person does not need special attention. Maturity comes, not by hammering ourselves, but by recognizing God's grace in our lives. God is the giver of the good. He demolishes our pride.

God possesses indescribable intelligence. He is all-knowing. He has never had to learn anything because he has always known everything. That is why God is never surprised, astounded or shocked. No one has ever put God in a bind. This God never asks us to do anything unreasonable. God's commands are his enablement.

1 Peter 5:6

"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time."

Therefore

This verse serves as a climax to the challenge to both the leaders and followers of verses one through five. Humility is common to the function of both roles.

humble yourselves

The word "humble" primarily signifies low-lying. Allow God to lower your level of autonomy. Often God uses suffering to birth humility in us.

"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:29).

"Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ--who in presence am lowly among you, but being absent am bold toward you" (2 Corinthians 10:1).

The Greek indicates that we are to allow ourselves to be humbled by God [passive voice]. Humility here means to recognize God's grace. God brings situations into our lives so that we understand that we are finite, not infinite. We are not God. We are at the mercy of His design for us. In His providence, he places events and people into our lives so that we concede our need for Him.

Do you want the grace of God in your life?
Humble yourselves.

"God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6).

Principle

Humility is recognizing God's grace and providential care for our lives.

Application

God will not humble us. Humility is our responsibility. When God directs that we humble ourselves and we then turn around and ask God to humble us, we insult God. If God does humble us, it will not be a pleasant experience (2 Corinthians 12:21).

Humility is not self-effacement. It is not standing round shouldered. Do not confuse humility with asceticism. A humble person can use the first person singular "I." Humility is an attitude toward God that gives Him the credit for who we are and what we do.

under the mighty hand of God

The word "mighty" refers to manifested power. When God manifests His power by providential movement on our lives, we need to identify what He is doing with us.

The Greek word refers to ruling power or the ability to rule. We get the words "autocratic" and "democratic" from this term [kratos]. Autocratic rule is self-rule. Democratic rule is rule of the people.

"The mighty hand of God" refers to God's hand upon our destiny. God's hand is an anthropomorphic (physical manifestation of God) idiom for God's providence over our lives. Believers need to have a humble attitude about God's destiny upon our lives (Genesis 50:20). There never will be a problem too great for the plan of God.

God's "hand" refers to his providence. We see something of the mighty hand of God in earthquakes, hurricanes and tornadoes. Large flattened sections of great cities give evidence of God's hand. However, this passage is not primarily referring to this kind of power. "Hand" here refers to God's providence in our personal lives. He divinely orchestrates every trial that comes our way.

"Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10).

Who is accountable for the events of our lives? Autonomy from God rebels against God's sovereignty.

It is not enough to subject ourselves to fellow Christians (5:5), we need to subject ourselves to God's sovereign plan for our lives.

"Or did God ever try to go and take for Himself a nation from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD Himself is God; there is none other besides Him" (Deuteronomy 4:34).

"Now these are Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed by Your great power, and by Your strong hand" (Nehemiah 1:10).

Principle

God's providential hand is upon every believer for His eternal purpose.

Application

Do you resent challenging situations God places in your life? God's omnipotent "hand" should make us humble. The God who put the stars in their place and rotates the sun on its course, is the God to whom we submit the situations of our lives. He has an eternal plan to everything that he does. God's hand gets heavy at times as He allows trial to come our way. He waits for some auspicious occasion to let us know that he is still God. Often we go out of the situation like a whipped dog with our tails dragging behind us. But we must remember that it is when we refuse to humble ourselves, that God humiliates us.

that He may exalt you

"Exalt" means to lift up. The lifting here is the lifting of revival. God will cause us to rise spiritually. We are placed on an exalted, higher spiritual plane when we humble ourselves before Him.

"Exalt" means promote. God will promote us in His plan. This promotion is not to be confused with human recognition. God promotes those who recognize His sovereignty over their lives. Humility is accepting the providence of God.

Most of us believe that recognition by a crowd of people is success. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The praise of, Madison Avenue is meaningless in God's eyes. Rather God elevates us on the basis of His character--those who humbly recognize His power and sovereignty.

To those who are suffering, it is encouraging to know God will exalt them one day. Humbling ourselves in order to be exalted is a spiritual paradox. But if you want to go up, you must go down.

"For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 14:11).

in due time

"Due time" means primarily due measure, due proportion. The New Testament uses "due time" to signify a season, a period possessing certain characteristics.

This word for time does not mean time as chronology but time as marked by certain features (1 Thessalonians 5:1). "Time" here deals with quality of time while the other major word for time (chronos) refers to quantity of time.

"In due time" is in God's time. God will exalt us in His own good time. When we humble ourselves under His hand, He will engage His help for us.

Principle

God promotes those who recognize His sovereignty over their lives.

Application

God does not promote us for producing so many brownie points with Him. He promotes us when we humble ourselves under His mighty hand when He sends trials our way.

If you do not know Christ, in just the right timing God sent His Son to die for your sins.

"For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6).

God's timing for our salvation centers around our recognition that we violate a holy God. Jesus died for the "ungodly." Jesus died for those without God. Will you now embrace the death of Christ for your sins?

1 Peter 5:7

"Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you."

Casting

This verse is a quote from Psalm 55:22.

This is one of the most popular verses in the Bible, yet we often take this verse out of its context. Note that the word "casting" is a participle making it dependent upon the previous statement in verse six. "Casting" is not a command but the means of how we humble ourselves (5:6). We humble ourselves by casting our anxieties on God. God's care comes when we humble ourselves and depend on His grace.

"Casting" means to throw upon and thus to deposit with. Secular Greek used "casting" for a man who carried a heavy burden and threw it upon a camel's back. "Casting" carries the idea of throw. It means to roll upon. God wants us to roll our burdens upon Him. God wants us to have a target to which we direct our anxiety. That target is God Himself.

The New Testament uses "casting" only two times, here and

"Then they brought him to Jesus. And they threw their own clothes on the colt, and they set Jesus on him" (Luke 19:35).

We cannot separate God's care from God's sovereign plan for us. God's plan for Asia Minor Christians is suffering. They need to humble themselves to God's plan for that suffering and to His grace to provide for them in suffering.

Principle

We are humble when we depend on God's grace for our lives.

Application

God does not design the situations of our life to break us but to make us. We are to move from trusting in our own resources and trusting in our strategies for life, to resting in God and His resources. God is willing and able to carry the heaviest burden for us.

When you are under pressure from worry, stop, take a breath and relax in God's grace.

"Blessed be the Lord, Who daily loads us with benefits, The God of our salvation! Selah" (Psalm 68:19).

all

The word "all" here does not mean "every" burden but the whole of our burdens. The emphasis in this passage is not on casting each individual anxiety, but on casting the whole of one's life on the Lord. He does not say "Cast the big burdens and keep the little ones."

"All" indicates that Christians face both a variety and significant amount and variety of "anxiety:" personal, family, employment, future, friends.

Principle

We need to come to the place where we realize that God is completely sufficient for any problem that may come into our lives.

Application

Before we can experience God's sufficiency, we need to realize our insufficiency to live the Christian life.

We should give the whole of our lives to God. God wants us to give Him the big burdens and the little burdens. We should deposit with Him not only spiritual but material burdens and we do this not only part of the time but all of the time.

What anxiety are you carrying just now, child of God? What is your heartache? What grief do you bear today? What disappointment? What hurt feeling? Whatever the burden, cast it upon the Lord. God does not want you to carry that burden.

God does not want us to cast only certain kinds of anxiety upon Him; He wants us to cast everything upon Him. Give it all to Him.

your care

"Care" is a compound of three words: split, the, mind. "Care" then, splits the mind and the splitting of the mind results in anxiety. Anxiety may be said to divide the mind: "Will the bad happen or will the good happen to me?" If we allow ourselves to think in different directions at the same time, we lose focus and concentration. Anxiety draws us in different directions leaving us in a kind of suspension. This state distracts us from God.

Anxiety is a fearful anguish coupled with uncertainty. It is our anticipation of misfortune as if God and His resources for us do not exist.

Anxiety distracts us from the resources of God. We enter into a state of turmoil, we cannot recognize the providence of God in our lives (v. 6).

The New Testament uses "anxiety" both in a good sense meaning "godly concern," and in a bad sense meaning "worry, anxiety." Paul exercised the good sense of "care" in his concern for the churches that he founded,

"Besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches" (2 Corinthians 11:28).

Martha expresses the bad sense of the word "care" when Jesus came for a visit,

"Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, 'Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.' And Jesus answered and said to her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her'" (Luke 10:38-42).

Martha allowed her household duties to distract her from a more important priority. Mary sat at the feet of Jesus to listen to the Word. Martha allowed lesser concerns to get in the way of greater concerns. She majored on minors and minored on majors.

Paul challenges the Philippians to free themselves from anxiety by prayer,

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7).

Principle

God is willing and able to carry our heaviest burden.

Application

Anxiety is the anguish resulting from the uncertainty of possible misfortune and disaster. Anxiety can distract us from spiritual priorities that and prevent a dynamic walk with God. None of us can escape the cares of life but we can free ourselves from anxiety. Troubles can surround us and yet not distress us if we put our anxieties in God's hands.

Remember, anxiety incapacitates us and makes us less able to face our problems.

God places problems in our lives not to break us but to make us. Anxiety rises from unbelief and unwillingness to accept God's sovereignty upon one's life.

Anxiety is also a violation of humility (5:6). People who have confidence in God do not have anxiety. If God is sovereign and if God cares for us, no affliction can be of any ultimate consequence (Romans 8:31).

"So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, 'The will of the Lord be done'" (Acts 21:14).

Anxiety can make us old before our time. We can worry ourselves into decline,

"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble" (Matthew 6:34).

Worry does not make a person more able to face a problem; it makes him less able.

"Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass" (Psalm 37:5).

upon Him,

The Christian is to cast his anxieties "upon Him" -- the Lord. This means no heartache, difficulty or problem is too difficult for the plan of God. No sin is too great for the plan of God.

Principle

God is willing and able to carry any care we may face.

Application

Unbelief is an exalting of self against God. We depend on self rather than God. But why worry if we are His concern? God is infinitely more concerned about our welfare than we are.

A child, who asks his parents every day, "Can I be sure that you will take care of me?" ruins his own well-being and breaks his parents' hearts. The trusting child goes about his play undisturbed and assured of his mother's love.

We can translate this phrase literally as "Because it is a care to Him for you," or, "Because you are His concern."

What is the basis for the casting of our anxieties on the Lord? It is simply that God cares for us. The word "for" means "because." This idea is very important because we must first understand who God is and that He cares for us, before we can cast our anxieties.

He cares

"Cares" in this clause is different from the word "care" in the first clause. This word does not mean anxiety but watchful care.

"But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, 'Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?'" (Mark 4:38).

God sustains us because He cares. We need to come to acknowledge that God cares for us and that no opposition against us can be of any ultimate consequence (Romans 8:31).

God does not share our burdens but He bears them, all of them. Our problems do not get the Lord down because He is omnipotent. God is all-potent, all-powerful.

Principle

God is our caretaker!

Application

Anxiety contradicts true humility. Thousands have come to know Christ as their sin-bearer but few know him as their burden-bearer. Unbelief is exaltation of self against God. If we depend upon ourselves and do not trust God with our problems, we rely upon our capacity not God's.

But God cares more about our welfare than we ever could. Moreover, He has an infinitely greater capacity to care for us. Rejection of this principle, is pride. Pride is at the foundation of most of our anxiety. We feel it is humiliating to cast everything upon someone else. Jesus argued that self-reliance is the reason we fill our lives with anxiety (Matthew 6:25-34).

Remember whenever God says or does anything, there is a reason behind it. God possesses indescribable intelligence. He has never had to learn anything since He has always known everything. Is your god smaller than that? The God of the Bible is not only omniscient (knows everything), but He is also omnipotent (all-

powerful) and omnipresent (everywhere present). There is a big difference between human resources and divine resources.

God is never surprised, astounded or shocked. God is never in a bind. God is never on the horns of a dilemma. When He says you are to cast, there is a reason. God never asks anything of us that is unreasonable. God's commandments are his enablement.

You have probably heard someone speak of a so-called carefree person, "That guy doesn't have a care in the world." But is that true? Not on your life! We all have things we are concerned about to one degree or another. Even if we do not wring our hands with worry, we all have concerns.

Some years ago Vance Havner told a story of an ailing old lady beset with troubles -- real and imaginary. Finally, people told her, "We've done all for you that we can. You will just have to trust God for your problem." She replied, "Oh, dear, has it come to that?" Havner said, "It always comes to that, so we might as well begin with that."

for you

God has our well-being at heart. He takes a personal interest in everything about us.

The Greek indicates that God's care for us is constant. His faithfulness is unending. His mercy is new every morning (Lamentations 3:21-23). No matter how fickle life may be, God's faithfulness is new every morning.

Principle

God has us at heart.

Application

The One who upholds the very universe cares for you. Your burdens matter to Him. He has a deep interest in you. He is concerned about your family. He is interested in your next house payment. He is concerned about everything you do.

God will give you an ear. He has plenty of time for you. "I could never lose interest in you. I died for you. I have too much invested in you to lose interest in you. My work in you will not be completed until you are in glory."

We often get the impression from our doctor that he is not that interested in us; he is too busy. The office is full and he wants to knock-off at five o'clock if he can. He runs his patients in and out like an assembly line. He just wants to get rid of us. We feel we are just a number -- just another patient. He does not really care about us personally. After all, it is not his arm that hurts. It is not his gall bladder that has a problem.

Similarly, the Devil will insinuate, "The Lord is not interested in you. You don't amount to anything as far as He is concerned. You are a no one. He is not concerned about you. He is too busy to bother with you."

"But I am poor and needed; yet the Lord thinks upon me" (Psalm 40:17).

I suppose this is what concerns God's people the most. We would like to have people take an interest in us. This is what bugs some teens. No one seems to be interested in them. Children sometimes get the impression that their parents aren't interested in them: "My parents are only interested in my oatmeal and underwear. I am here, and there is not much they can do about it. I am inconvenient to them and I get on their nerves. They don't really care about me."

If children grow up with that attitude, they often do something to get attention. They will steal a car or fail in school. They may do a little shoplifting. "I'm here. I'm a person. See me." Everyone likes to be noticed. You are a human being, a person, and an individual. No one likes to be ignored. Our God cares for us, if no one else does.

"But the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matthew 10:30).

Though we cannot cast our anxiety over to God in the sense of being liberated from problems; we can shift the weight of them to Him. There may be some instances when we say, "Why bother the Lord with them? I ought to be able to work out this problem. After all, I'm a mature adult." Yet, you have had that problem five years now. You are not doing much with it. Cast that care on the Lord no matter how insignificant it may appear.

However, if you insist on carrying your own burdens and solving your own problems, He will

leave you to your own devices. You will worry yourself to death.

1 Peter 5:8

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."

Two commands in this verse warn the believer of a mortal enemy. The Christian life is like jungle war. Every Christian is facing spiritual guerilla warfare. Peter tells us who our enemy is--the Devil.

Be sober

"Sober" literally signifies to abstain from wine. The New Testament uses "sober" metaphorically of spiritual alertness or watchfulness (1 Thessalonians 5:6, 8; 2 Timothy 4:5; 1 Peter 1:13; 4:7).

A drunken person has neither a clear mind nor any control over motor activities. When are Christians most likely to lose control? When we are spiritually out of shape.

Sober people are balanced in disposition, thought and action. They are not flighty or carried away by their own notions or others' notions. They are mentally self-controlled and understand the situations they will face in life.

Principle

The Christian should have poise and self-control in any situation they face.

Application

Christians, be wary, Satan is at work. In spiritual war, he never goes on leave. He is always on the prowl.

Christians who possess poise have stability for the changing circumstances of life. This stability comes from their ability to apply truth to any situation of life (vv. 9-10). If we take truth into our minds without applying it, this is not balance or poise.

The believer should be self-possessed under all circumstances (1 Thessalonians 5:6; 2 Timothy 4:5). Athletes who seek to be at the top of their game, refrain from doing things other people would take for granted. Self-control makes for

discipline. As well, Christians are to be dispassionate in adversity. They control their thought processes and thus not experience the danger of irrational thinking. Nothing perturbs their mind. They do not indulge in excess but use restraint in behavior.

Some college students face a final exam in two hours. Will they allow fear of taking the exam to neutralize their ability to remember what they studied? If they have the ability to maintain poise by applying passages that pertain to fear (2 Timothy 1:7), fear will not subvert their studies.

be vigilant

"Vigilant" carries the idea of to watch, stay awake. Here it means to keep spiritually alert (Acts 20:31; 1 Corinthians 16:13; Colossians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:6, 10).

Secular Greek used this term to describe people carefully crossing a river while stepping on slippery stones. If they did not pay strict attention to their steps, they would end up in the water. So the idea of vigilance is to stay alert and cautious (Mark 13:37; 14:34-40). The Christian who does not give strict attention to Satanic attack is in for trouble.

"Vigilant" was used as a military term--stand guard, be vigilant in a military situation. Like a Green Beret on patrol, the Christian should watch out for a guerrilla attack from the Devil. There are no front lines in his strategy to defeat us. The enemy could come from anywhere. Spiritually, this means to orient to the plan of God (Matthew 24:42; 25:13; 26:41; Revelation 3:2; 16:15).

Principle

To win spiritual battles, we must stand guard against our enemy, the Devil.

Application

We tend to drop our guard occasionally in our spiritual lives. Good soldiers stand at their post, scanning the horizon for any sign of the enemy.

Christians do not live in an era of peace. They are at war. Too many of us think that we live at peace with our enemy, the Devil himself. He engages us in war whether we want to fight or not. We need to engage the enemy in spiritual warfare. We should

understand the spiritual mine fields the Devil lays for us.

The Christian is in a power struggle with the enemy. Usually the army with the greatest power wins. The Gulf war was an overwhelming and decisive mounting of force against Iraq. The Christians have at their command an overwhelming source of power. Fleshly, human power will not do in this war. The rules of engagement for this war are found in chapter 6 of Ephesians.

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints" (Ephesians 6:10-18).

because your adversary the devil

The word "devil" is not a proper name but a functional title. It comes from two words through and to throw. This conveys the idea to strike through. Therefore, "devil" comes to mean to thrust through, as thrusting a sword through the body of someone. The Devil is one who traduces, calumniates, slanders, accuses and defames.

The word "devil" also means adversary. The idea "adversary" meant an opponent in a lawsuit (Matthew 5:25; Luke 12:58; 18:3). The idea then is to accept a complaint against someone for a legal review. The Devil--who is actively and

continuously hostile toward us legally accuses us before God.

The Devil would place cancerous thoughts in the minds of people about us. If he can make us disillusioned by these personal attacks on us, he might draw us into apostasy.

The word "Devil" occurs thirty-eight times in the New Testament. The word does not occur in the Old Testament; it is strictly a New Testament word. The Devil is in the Old Testament but under a different name.

Principle

Christian need to grasp their legal rights before God.

Application

We can laugh at the Devil and not take him seriously. However, he takes us very seriously. The Devil is just as real as Jesus Christ is. If you do not believe in the Devil, it is because you probably do not believe in Jesus Christ. The Devil is not like Santa Claus or the Easter Bunny. He is a real person.

The Devil launches litigation against our souls. He accuses us before God Himself. As our antagonist, the Devil maligns, slanders and falsely accuses us. Occasionally he mentions our name in a very unfavorable light to God. He accuses us and slanders us (Revelation 12:9,10). However, the Devil is a disbarred accuser. Every time he mentions our name before God the Lord Jesus steps forward and appeals to His blood (Hebrews 2:14,15; 7:25; 1 John 2:1-2). Justification means we are legally right before God forever. Case dismissed.

We have three enemies: the world, the flesh and the Devil (1 Corinthians 16:9). The world is our external foe, the flesh is our internal foe and the Devil is our infernal foe. God expects us to come off the field of battle victorious over all three foes (1 John 5:4). Do not become broken and old before your time. These three foes will take their pound of flesh if we allow them.